



CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

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November 16, 1999

Dr. Sarah Gerould
National Coordinator, USGS Place-Based Studies Program
U. S. Geological Survey
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, MS 906
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Dr. Gerould:

I write to express my appreciation for the substantial contributions being made by USGS scientists in the development, conduct, and review of CALFED scientific programs and, in particular, to express support for the funding that is being provided through the USGS Place-Based Studies Program in support of important CALFED technical objectives.

We at CALFED are well aware and supportive of the two interdisciplinary Place-Based study projects underway in the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary: (1) the study of trophic structure in the Napa Salt Ponds, and (2) the study of the inter-relations among freshwater flows, sediments, contaminants, and biota in Suisun Bay. I want to personally endorse continued full funding for these efforts.

The Napa Salt Pond study, while not located in CALFED's immediate "problem area", Suisun Bay and Delta, is tackling CALFED-relevant questions regarding how species utilization of wetland habitats varies with differing physical regimes and how we might predict outcomes and consequences of wetland restoration efforts. We look forward to the development of the proposed conceptual model of waterbird and fish use with respect to hydrology, water quality, primary productivity, invertebrate abundance, flows and sediments in these wetlands, because we feel that the model should have broad applicability in CALFED's wetland restoration programs.

The comprehensive study in Suisun/Grizzly Bays, a key region of CALFED's "problem area" is addressing a broad suite of questions regarding the connections between flows, sediments, contaminants, and biota. Understanding these connections is important to our efforts to improve the well being of key species that depend on this region of the Bay-Delta system for food and habitat. While all aspects of this study are directly related to one or more CALFED objectives, I want to point out that five areas of study are especially relevant to our restoration objectives:

1. The examination of the extent to which mercury-contaminated hydraulic mining debris in this system might be a threat to proposed restoration efforts.

CALFED Agencies

California The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board
Department of Food and Agriculture

Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Geological Survey
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Forest Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service
Western Area Power Administration



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2. The development of a conceptual model of the food web base in Suisun Bay that is a direct augmentation of a CALFED-funded study of the food web within the Delta.
3. The study of the fate and effects of selenium, also an augmentation of a CALFED-funded study, that is addressing a controversial question with immediate implications for restoration.
4. An intensive field program focused on developing a much clearer understanding of water, salt, and sediment movement in Grizzly Bay that will, in turn, provide much needed answers to the difficult questions regarding the importance of shallow water habitat to the ecology of key bay-delta species.
5. The development of models to reconstruct historical freshwater flows and salinities in San Francisco Bay, thereby to allow forecasting of salinities under different future climate and river inflow scenarios.

The outcome of these studies is important to CALFED's overall program. In short, we at CALFED are highly supportive of these USGS-funded efforts to help us understand and resolve some of the long-standing environmental issues of the San Francisco Bay-Delta-Watershed system. Thus, we urge that you, in your capacity as the Coordinator of the USGS Place-Based Studies Program, continue to provide funding, to the fullest extent possible, in support of these valuable studies. The many challenges and goals facing CALFED and its constituent agencies and entities can be met only through a combining of resources - CALFED's own funding and the funding brought to the table by its constituent agencies and stakeholder groups.

To this end please let me know how I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Ritchie
Acting Executive Director

cc: Frederic H. Nichols
Coordinator USGS San Francisco Bay-Delta
Place-Based Studies Program